



AREERA State Plans of Work

This Plan of Work (POW) newsletter will focus on the findings of the 2007 Annual Report with general recommendations for improving reporting for the 2008 Annual Report. This newsletter will focus on streamlining your Plan of Work and Annual Report.

Limit Outputs and Outcomes

We have found that the most useful pieces of data for CSREES are the qualitative outcomes written with quantitative evidence of performance. We suggest fewer outputs be reported in the next Annual Report since they are not as useful to CSREES as outcomes. Furthermore, only report your quality outcomes that have come to fruition. This will reduce burden on both the States and CSREES reviewers. To do this, make liberal use of the checkbox attached to each output and outcome which states “Not Reporting on this Output Measure” or “Not Reporting on this Outcome measure.”

I have often stated that if you are reporting on outcomes for a particular Planned Program, there is no need to include targets for your outputs. You only need to acknowledge that they exist in your Plan of Work as part of the logic model framework of the Planned Program. Also, if CSREES receives one or two quality outcome statements per Planned Program, we will have one to two thousand quality outcomes from which to choose when we complete reports

for Portfolio reviews, the PART process for OMB, the budget submission, and other external requirements.

What does a Quality Outcome Statement Look Like?

The following is an actual outcome statement gleaned and rewritten from the 2007 Annual Report we consider to be a good outcome statement. It answers the question, “So What?”

Issue: Producers, seedsmen, grain merchandisers, processors, crop consultants, plant breeders, and extension staff are interested in new cultivars that bring them increased revenue.

What has been done: The new varieties Fallar Wheat, Lariat and Stampede pinto beans, Sheyenne non-transgenic soybean, RG7008RR soybean, and Pinnacle two-row barley were released for use.

Results: The estimated dollar value to producers, seedsmen, grain merchandisers, processors, crop consultants, and plant breeders on these new varieties is \$290,600,000 for 2007. Moreover, because of best management practices developed by research and extension, wheat and barley producers reduced economic losses by \$40,000,000 through use of better varieties of wheat and through use of fungicides.

Type of Outcome

As stated in the last newsletter, a common problem found in the Annual Report is the mislabeling of outcome type. We have found numerous examples of change in knowledge and change in action outcomes that were mislabeled as change in condition outcomes. Please recheck your outcome labels. This is important because CSREES often looks for certain types of outcomes when completing reports for the budget, portfolio reviews, etc. To help us search for these outcomes, we use filters and database queries to find the outcome types we need. Mislabeled outcomes types may cause an excellent outcome to be lost.

Change in Knowledge Outcomes: Occur when there is a change in knowledge or the participants actually learn:

- New fundamental or applied knowledge
- Improved skills
- How technology is applied
- About new plant & animal varieties
- Increased knowledge of decision-making, life skills, and positive life choices among youth & adults
- Policy knowledge
- New improved methods

Change in Action (or Behavior) Outcomes: Occur when there is a change in behavior or the participant's act upon what they've learned and:

- Apply improved fundamental or applied knowledge
- Adopt new improved skills
- Directly apply information from publications
- Adopt and use new methods or improved technology
- Use new plant & animal varieties
- Increased skill by youth & adults in making informed life choices
- Actively apply practical policy and decision-making knowledge

Change in Condition Outcomes: Occur when a societal condition is improved due to a participant's action taken (Change in Action). For example, specific contributions to:

- Increased market opportunities overseas and greater economic competitiveness
- Better and less expensive animal health
- Vibrant & competitive agricultural workforce
- Higher productivity in food provision
- Better quality-of-life for youth & adults in rural communities
- Safer food supply
- Reduced obesity and improved nutrition & health
- Higher water quality and a cleaner environment

Brevity and Conciseness in the Executive Summary

Another way to streamline your document is by limiting the text in your Executive Summary. The Executive Summary is a brief overview narrative of your total program. You should be able to simply copy and paste text into this field from your current state's yearly brief publication or overview that you use for other purposes within your state. Note that although this text box will allow up to 64,000 characters (about 10-12 pages of text), we encourage you not to use that much space. Conciseness and brevity are encouraged. Two to five pages should suffice. Just discuss the highlights of your State program and a few of the outcomes and accomplishments to which you want to give high visibility. **Let the Planned Programs section attend to detail.**

The Next Newsletter

The next newsletter will focus on what you can do to further streamline your Annual Report.

For more information on the Plan of Work, e-mail the Plan of Work staff at

pow@csrees.usda.gov, or call Bart Hewitt, 202-720-0747.